

February 5, 1957

*Let* *Mama Jela*

Memorandum

To: John P. Milligan  
From: Harold A. Lett  
Subject: Teacher College Admission Blanks

I have looked over the blanks secured by you from Montclair, Trenton and Glassboro Teacher Colleges. I also note the letter written in 1951 by Joe Bustard to Dr. Huber of Montclair Teachers College. First, with respect to the Bustard letter, I think it is important for us to remember that at that time New Jersey was alone in having the full responsibility for administering a law relating to public accommodations which also was made to mean educational institutions. Our five eastern states in the spring of 1950 had just promulgated rules as to admissible and inadmissible questions on employment application forms. No one had tackled school admission forms other than ourselves. Mr. Bustard as an educator himself was influenced by what he considered the necessity of aiding recall of a candidate by having a photograph available. It isn't at all surprising, therefore, that he permitted optional use of a photograph or that he even went so far as to accept the Montclair school's demand for proof of a father's citizenship.

Actually, therefore, this brings us to the point almost of starting from scratch in deciding whether the newer emphases in educational integration demand a new look at all application forms as a single facet of educational practices. This in turn seems to me suggests the need for re-evaluating every single question that could be in doubt, to determine the exact practical use to which that information is being and can be put. As to a photograph, you have my views. I think its use is utterly unnecessary and can lead only to invitation for discriminatory practice. As to proof of a parent's citizenship, this leaves me absolutely cold as having no value whatsoever in determining the admissibility of a young American whose character, scholarship, and citizenship have been determined. On the basis of these several generalizations, therefore, I come to a discussion of the particular forms.

Strangely enough, the Glassboro form is flawless from our point of view. The Trenton Teachers College form has eliminated all objectionable questions including request for photograph but has retained, peculiarly enough, the question as to birthplace of parents of a candidate. I can't find a single reason to justify this question. I think it should be eliminated. The Montclair form, of course, has the request for a photograph. I have discussed with you the reaction of Montclair students to the speciousness of arguments for retention of this "optional" request. Also on page one of the duplicate form A, we find the question, "If foreign born is (s)he naturalized?" in referring to the candidate's parents. In the same section is the question "What languages are spoken in your home?"

If the school is interested in whether or not the parents are citizens, they should ask this. It is no more the business of a state school to establish first and second class citizens than it is that of an industrialist. If in the second instance they are interested in the candidate's familiarity with a language other than English, they should ask this. A secondary line of questioning can establish whether or not there is reading or speaking fluency. Delving into the nationality origin or domestic climate of the family is completely irrelevant when it serves at the same time to establish the nationality background of a candidate. Without a doubt, Montclair Teachers College would give strong arguments for the retention of these requests. I wonder how Gloucester and Trenton are able to stay in business without finding such data essential.

As stated earlier, I believe that it is essential that we promulgate very definite regulations with respect to some of the traditional lines of inquiry. If I were not so swamped at this moment, I would volunteer to do the initial scanning pointing toward this particular objective. If it should be your desire to have me engage in this preliminary thinking, I couldn't get into it until toward the middle of March.